



**OPCW**

**Conference of the States Parties**

Eighteenth Session  
2 – 5 December 2013

C-18/NAT.32  
3 December 2013  
ENGLISH and FRENCH only

**TUNISIA**

**STATEMENT GIVEN BY M. MOHAMED KARIM BEN BECHER AMBASSADOR  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE TUNISIAN REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW AT  
THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairman,  
Mr Director-General,  
Excellencies, distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I should like, first of all, on behalf of the Tunisian Government and on my own behalf, to congratulate you warmly on your election to the Chair of the Eighteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. Your election represents renewed and confirmed testimony to your qualities, both professional and human, since, a few months ago, you were elected to the Chair of the Committee of the Whole of the Third Review Conference. Under your enlightened leadership, the work of that Committee was crowned with success.

I should also like to praise the work done by your predecessor, Ambassador Peter Goosen, both during the work of the Seventeenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and throughout the intersessional period, by way of the added value he brought both as Chairman and as coordinator of the African Group.

I should also like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to our Director-General, His Excellency Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, and the staff of his Technical Secretariat for their professional devotion and the quality of the efforts which they constantly make to assure the success of our common undertaking.

My delegation looks forward to working in concert with you, Mr Chairman, and we remain convinced that your abilities are a safeguard for the success of this Session. Hence, I should like henceforth to assure you of the full support of my delegation in accomplishing your mission to contribute to the success of this Conference.

My delegation, which supports the statements on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement and China, would like to express itself on certain matters which it feels are pertinent.

The highlight of 2013 was the holding of the Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the work of which concluded on a basis of consensus.



This was achieved despite the fact that, as is appropriate to recall, the difficulties encountered on that occasion, which were related to the question of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, an action strictly prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention to any person, under any circumstances, whatsoever, and reprehensible under the international norms and standards.

That Conference was crowned with success in more than one way. In fact, it bolstered consensus as the mechanism of principle within the OPCW, strengthened the solidarity of the States Parties and proved the importance of respect for the pertinent provisions of the Convention. In this framework, I commend once more the judicious, praiseworthy efforts which you have not spared as Chairman of the Committee of the Whole to arrive at that objective, as well as the talent and experience of Mr Krzysztof Paturej, Chairman of the Third Review Conference, at which Tunisia chaired the Credentials Committee. I should also like to highlight the substantial contribution made by Her Excellency Mrs Nassima Baghli, Ambassador of Algeria, as Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group charged with the preparations for the Third Review Conference.

Dismantling the large Syrian chemical arsenal and the facilities related thereto has been the most notable topic in 2013. The OPCW, because of the mandates given to it by the Executive Council decision on the “Destruction of the Syrian Chemical Weapons” adopted on 27 September 2013, and which was followed that same day by Resolution 2118 (2013) of the UN Security Council, has been charged with supervising the complete, definitive destruction of Syria’s chemical programme.

In this connection, my delegation is pleased with the central role assigned to our Organisation and extends its unconditional support to the OPCW-UN Joint Mission deployed in Syria, within the framework of this process.

My delegation also supports the Executive Council decisions relating to the “Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” adopted on 15 November 2013 and the “Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” adopted very recently on 29 November 2013.

There is no doubt that the task of dismantling the Syrian chemical programme within the deadlines set is not an easy one, bearing in mind the complexity of its exceptional nature; we are certain that this is a challenge which the OPCW will be able to meet.

The news that we received on 11 October 2013, from the Director-General of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize 2013 will no doubt go down in the history of our young Organisation.

This prestigious award, a source of pride for all of us States Parties who advocates international peace and security, has crowned the tireless efforts which the OPCW has not ceased to put forth since its creation on 29 April 1997, in order to destroy this category of weapons of mass destruction which makes no distinction between civilian and military, and leaves behind consequences that are intolerable for the victims.

The OPCW’s growing efforts, illustrated by the launching of the chemical disarmament process in Syria, although they have brought the OPCW merited exposure to the public, must

not hide the efficiency which has always characterised the work of the Technical Secretariat and all the personnel of the OPCW in other lands.

Moreover, I could not let this opportunity pass without extending the sincere congratulations of my delegation to everyone who has helped to make the OPCW shine to the proud point of being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize this year.

My delegation perceives the Convention as a precious *acquis* for humanity. It stands indeed at a crossroads in as much as it provides a point of reference in the fields of both disarmament and non-proliferation; it is the only international legal instrument combating this category of weapons of mass destruction.

Effective application of the relevant provisions of the *acquis* that is the Convention is a tribute to the adhesion of all the countries of the world to the Convention, which today has 190 States Parties. Furthermore, combining the efforts of the Technical Secretariat and of the States Parties is, in my eyes, crucial to the appeal to the countries remaining outside the Convention's field of application to join at the earliest.

Tunisia is actively engaged in the causes of general disarmament and advocated the establishment of zones free of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world.

It is in the framework of this commitment that my country was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention in 1997, and to fulfil the obligations stemming from being a Member State of the OPCW.

This commitment to the Convention was reaffirmed the day following the Tunisian Revolution of 2011 which showed our people's aspiration to a better life and opened the way for Tunisia allowing it to subscribe even more to the international principals and values of liberty, democracy and peace.

Tunisia, which has had a National Authority since 1999 and since 2007 legislation in implantation of the relevant provisions of Article VII of the Convention, is ready to support the efforts of Technical Secretariat and the States Parties by affording any necessary assistance to States which have not yet adopted Article VII legislation.

The matter of assistance and of protection against chemical weapons under Article X of the Convention is crucially important to my delegation.

Tunisia would be pleased by any concrete measures taken by the Conference to apply this Article to contribute to the reinforcement of the capacities of States Parties, in particular those that are developing, so that they may face new challenges flowing from the evolution and current position of the Convention.

In this context, Tunisia had the privilege of organising in 2010, jointly with the OPCW, the third assistance exercise (ASSISTEX 3) and is fully disposed to continue working with the OPCW to take advantage of national expertise and results obtained.

Furthermore, Tunisia would be pleased to see the Conference accord particular importance to the OPCW Programme for Africa, initiated by the Director-General, and fully supports any action that seeks to implement this programme. In the context of this programme, at its

National Institute for Physical and Chemical Research and Analysis (INRAP), the first and second OPCW courses on analytical chemistry. These courses were designed for French-speaking African States Parties and were held in 2011 and 2013.

Furthermore, in the light of the number and quality of the African States Parties in the Organisation, Tunisia takes this opportunity to renew its appeal to increase the numbers of African members of staff within the Technical Secretariat.

In this connection my delegation is pleased by the recent nomination of Mr Taoheed Olufemi Elias a member of staff from an African State, Nigeria, to the post of legal advisor of the OPCW. My delegation welcomes Mr Elias with us today and expresses to him its best wishes for success.

Access by all States Parties and their companies to the international market in chemicals, knowledge and know-how, for purposes not prohibited by the Convention, in regard to Article XI their right to economic stimulus.

In this context Tunisia would be greatly obliged if the Conference could initiate an integrated, non-discriminatory, effective implementation of the relevant provisions of this Article which, after all, was an inducement to several countries which do not possess chemical weapons to adhere to the Convention.

My delegation further trusts that the Conference will pay particular attention to the decision of the Sixteenth Conference of the States Parties on the elements of an agreed framework for the integrated implementation of Article XI. I should like therefore to stress that this is an essential factor for balancing the Convention.

Our Conference ought to express itself on the renewal of the mandate of Mr Ahmet Üzümcü, current Director-General of the OPCW, for a new term, on the basis of a recommendation made to it by the Executive Council. In this connection I have pleasure in joining my voice to all those which have preceded me to express my full support for his re-election to the head of the OPCW.

As I repeat my countries commitment to the objectives of the Convention, allow me in conclusion to reaffirm the full contribution of my delegation to the work of this Conference and to assure you of our readiness to support consensus to bring our deliberations to a conclusion.

I should be obliged if this statement could be distributed as an official document of the Eighteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

With my best wishes for the success of our Conference, I thank you for your kind attention.

- - - 0 - - -